

And I know it takes some courage for elected officials to raise the issue, but I just think we are at a magic moment of transition. I believe the grandparents, as long as they are secure in getting the current system, will want their grandchildren to have the best possible future. And I believe we can have an honest, adult, dialogue about this without the kind of mudslinging and the kind of 30-second commercials that so badly weaken our political structures. So, I encourage you to look at it, to offer us advice, but I also encourage you to look at the state program. I do not know the details of your program, but I will tell you that Michigan has now adopted a new, personal pension system that vests within two years, where the new employees are controlling their own money in a way that is a very dramatic departure from the way we have done pensions in the last 60 years.

Finally, I want to ask a very touchy question, and you are the first group of legislators I have done this with. So I will be very curious to see your reaction after I leave and you no longer have to be polite because I am around. I want to raise a serious question: In peacetime, in a free society, how much should your government be allowed to take from you?

I was fascinated when I read Paul Johnson's new History of the American People. He is a former socialist in Britain turned conservative and he has written a wonderful history of the American people. And he said that in 1775, we were probably the lowest-taxed people in the history of the world and we hated every penny. And he said we were so grateful that we were so low-taxed as to say, "How come you need this?" And the part about how much freedom, in part, is a function of how much time you have. How much money do you have? Not how much does your government have to give to you. How much do you have? And it turns out that when you study it that the American people said for forty years that they believe, in peacetime, the most their government should take from them is 25 percent. We currently—federal, state and local—take 38.

And what I would like to propose is that we set a goal over the next ten to fifteen years to get to 25 percent taxation. The feds currently take about 22 percent. I propose we go down to 14 percent. So we lose 8 percent. State and local currently takes about 16 percent, I propose state and local goes down to about 11 percent. So we will drop by more than you will have to drop. But, I think it is fair for you to come back to us and say, "Fine, how about block-granting education money rather than having 700 little programs? How about dropping this kind of red tape?" I think it is a two-way dialogue.

But, if we take Demming and Drucker; if we are prepared to prioritize, modernize, downsize and privatize, we can create, over the next ten to fifteen years, a country where people have more take-home pay, a better retirement system, a lifetime learning system, and an education system that either works or is changed rapidly when it starts to fail. People will be competitive in the world market, having the highest technology and the greatest entrepreneurship to produce the best goods, giving us the highest incomes with the greatest economic security and the capacity to lead the world.

Yes, this is big. Yes, it is a lot. But, frankly, the Contract With America was pretty different when we started and I am very proud that at the key moment in the fall of 1994, we bought a two-page ad in TV Guide that did not attack anybody, did not have any pictures. It just said, "You hire us and we will try to do these ten things." And I think the time has come as citizens, across the board in both parties, to talk about for

the next generation, "What are the goals worth doing? Let us work together to do it."

I accept fully the responsibility today that I have come here and said, you come up with ideas on the drug war; we have to listen to you and at least try to help. You come up with what we need to do to get out of your way in education; we have an obligation to listen and try to help. You tell us what we are doing wrong about pensions that make your job harder, let us know. And you tell us how you think we should change federal pension law. It would be very helpful and we would listen to you.

And finally, if we are going to get there together, we have an obligation both to shrink the federal government and to shrink the burden the federal government imposes on you. But, I think for our citizens, the America I just described would be a vastly better place.

And let me just close with this thought. Every time I come out here, I have to tell you, I just love coming to this state. I think part of it relates to the fact that I was here—some of you will be able to identify this—a few years ago on a stopover and went down to the fish market and bought a geoduck and took it to my mother-in-law, who promptly chopped it up and made stew out of it. I have to say, also, that I just brought back a very wonderful salmon that they identified with much more immediately and ate immediately.

But, it is a fabulous state. You sort of have this sense, I always have this sense, when I come here what Lewis and Clark must have felt. As an easterner, when I fly in and look out at Mt. Rainier, when I look at Puget Sound, when I see the weather, even on rare days like yesterday—again, for a Georgian, it was very exciting—I think we lose, sometimes, the romanticism of what this country is about. This country is a romance. This country has the most magical way of saying to the whole planet, "I do not care what your background is, I do not care what your religion is, I do not care what your ethnicity is. If you have a big enough dream and you are willing to pursue it, come to America and try it out." And the result has been to put together the most exciting opportunities for people in the history of the world.

This is a great country filled with good people and given a chance to achieve remarkable things. I believe we can work together in a partnership—not us dictating to you—but in a partnership. And we can give our children and grandchildren an even greater America with an even greater future. And through that, we can give the entire human race an opportunity to live in freedom and prosperity and safety.

Thank you for honoring me by allowing me to come here today. Thank you.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

HON. PATSY T. MINK

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 3, 1998

Mrs. MINK of Hawaii. Mr. Speaker, on February 11 and 12, 1998, I was granted a leave of absence and according missed Roll Call votes number 12 through 17. Had I been present I would have voted No on Roll Call number 12, and Yes on Roll Call number 13, Yes on Roll Call number 14, Yes on Roll Call number 15, Yes on Roll Call number 16, and No on Roll call number 17.

HONORING THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN HISPANIC CHURCH

HON. ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 3, 1998

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Mr. Speaker, today, I am proud to recognize the First Presbyterian Hispanic Church.

The Cuban patriot Jose Marti once said: "We need temples of love and humanity that free everything that is generous in man." Marti's vision was one shared by Reverend Ernesto Sosa, a constituent of my congressional district. Reverend Sosa, along with a group of dedicated leaders, founded the Primera Iglesia Hispana Prebysteriana, the First Presbyterian Hispanic Church on March 2, 1958, in Miami, Florida. This group of dedicated community leaders who for many years had fought for freedom and democracy in Cuba, returned to there in the hopes of establishing the church in their homeland. Their dreams were shattered, however, when the Castro dictatorship set itself on a course of religious oppression and persecution.

The group returned to this great country where individual freedoms are not only valued but protected and when they would be free to complete their generous and noble task. The church began by establishing a center to assist new refugees, a place where regardless of race or creed, people were offered food, clothing and medicine. A year after the establishment of the center, a clinic and nursery were developed to provide additional services to the community. The center not only offered resources to the public, but spiritual guidance at a time when many of these families were suffering through the difficulty of being separated from their loved ones and adjusting to life in their new country.

The Iglesia Prebysteriana Hispana de Miami eventually built a new temple to accommodate their growing congregation. The current pastor, Reverend Mardoqueo Munoz-Castillo, continues to lead the congregation in weekly Sunday masses. Today, after celebrating the fortieth anniversary of their founding, the church provides a variety of support resources to the public and, as always, important spiritual guidance.

NATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL MONTH

HON. RICHARD E. NEAL

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, March 3, 1998

Mr. NEAL. Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to stand before this great legislative body during Education Week to acknowledge the positive educational initiatives that are taking place in the Second Congressional District of Massachusetts.

This month is National Middle Level Education Month, and I would like to take this opportunity to commend Mary E. Wells Junior High School in Southbridge, Massachusetts for the strides they are making in promoting academic excellence to all of their students. Mary E. Wells Junior High School, under the